U.Mc.Dermith. E-3 (1922-1924) 1948
NEA. McDermith NEA

If I were to investigate and report on the Bella Coola as the present time, I would undoubtedly be influenced by many years of contact with American anthropologists and their work. I would assume a greater knowledge of North-West coast institutions, less interest in the details of ceremonial rites, and it would be impossible not to avoid comparisons with, and observations upon, the theoretical implications of many of the facts recorded. But though every field investigator is strictly objective as to the facts he collects, yet his interests, and his method of presenting them, are coloured by his background; in my case, by the older school of English anthropology. On the whole, I think this is fortunate. It means that the Bella Coola are portrayed as I saw them when I came fresh to a new field, practically uninfluenced by problems of North-West coast culture, and fully prepared to devote myself to their life. They were "my people," not a group in which I was interested because they had, or had not, certain culture traits with which I was concerned. In the course of my teaching experience, furthermore, I have wished repeatedly to give serious students detailed field monographs in which are recorded the interwoven social, religious, and folk-lore concepts of a people, the sum-total of their material life, collected by one man at one time. This I have tried to do for the Bella Coola.

Following the English tradition, I wish to record how this material was collected. Before leaving for British Columbia, I was advised by the late H. I. Smith, who had worked in the area, to talk to Indian Moody (see Plate 1), an elderly Bella Coola Indian with whom Smith had worked. On explaining to Indian that I had come to record in permanent form the traditions and lore of his people, Indian gave me a friendly and promised his help. Unfortunately, he spoke only a few words of English. I tried interpreters after interpreters, Indian and white, with only fair success, and my difficulties increased with the opening of the canning season and the consequent employment of the younger men and women. I was urged to learn the Chinook Jargon, which serves widely as a lingua franca on the

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)948
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PREFACE

coast, and began the study with much misgiving. The results were surprisingly satisfactory.

After a few weeks I found that I had sufficient knowledge of Chinook to dispense with interpreters and deal directly with the older people, a tremendous advantage. Pride of ancestry is one of the strongest characteristics of the Bella Coola, and once convinced of my sincere interest in and respect for their history, they were willing to talk. They resent the condescension with which most white men regard them, so that contact with one who was friendly and sympathetic came as a pleasant surprise. There were, of course, difficulties. The canning season had begun and every able-bodied man was working away from the village. The conviction of each person that he was the best source of information, and that conferences with another were useless or unreliable, caused distrust. The desire of each informant to discuss only what interested him; the complexity of Bella Coola life itself; the necessity of checking every statement, and the extreme difficulty of doing so on account of discrepancies in the myths of different families; the fear, almost groundless, of each individual that someone else had infringed on his rights by recounting some legend; and, not least, the need for tact, patience, and a sense of humour under all conditions, were some of the obstacles to be surmounted. Nor was Chinook entirely satisfactory. It has enough words for matters pertaining to fishing, hunting, and trading, but for the realms of sociology or theology it is inadequate. This difficulty could not have been overcome without the patient help of my informants. Animated by the desire to help, they used every expedient in the way of parallel and synonym to explain obscure terms. Sometimes a younger man was called in for some obscure meaning; more often it gradually became clear from different applications. Once the significance of a word was definitely understood, I made a note of it and used it henceforth. A useful vocabulary was thus built up, and conversations were carried on in mixed Bella Coola and Chinook, eked out by whatever English words were known by the person with

1:McDowall E-5 (1922-1924)1968
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from ghosts, and for four days feeds them lavishly. On the fifth morning they proceed to the grave, accompanied by kinsmen of the deceased, and pound on the ground with sticks, asking the dead person whether or not he had been murdered, and if so, the name of the murderer. It is said that in former times the voice of the deceased could always be plainly heard giving the desired information. This ceremony has not been carried out for many years, and exact details are not known by any of the living Bella Coola. It seems clear that ventriloquism must have been employed, requiring active deception on the part of the shamans.

It was difficult to ascertain to what extent shamans believed in their own powers to understand the speech of ghosts. There is no doubt that the Bella Coola are easily influenced by suggestion, and if an individual is told that he has received help from a ghost, it is not difficult for him to believe that such has been the case. Further, his fellows are convinced of his powers, a circumstance which does not fail to affect him. It may be stated definitely that in many cases shamans have some confidence in their own powers, although they do not hesitate to use deception to increase their prestige. This point will be considered in greater detail in the following chapter.

ACCOUNTS OF EXPERIENCES WITH GHOSTS

Much of the information concerning ghosts is contained in stories which have been handed down for generations and which are regarded as historical records. Some of these must be deferred to the chapters on folk-lore and shamanism, but the following are sufficient to explain the source of many Bella Coola beliefs on this subject.*

A Woman from Ghosts

Long, long ago, there lived a little girl who used to cry incessantly. One evening when she was disturbing the whole household by weeping, her father said angrily to her:

*These stories have been included at this point as specific illustrations of the type of legend upon which generalized beliefs depend.

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756 erated, there is a tendency for such ability to be granted to the descendants of shamans, but this is not necessarily the case. A shaman can instruct his child and so increase the latter's chances of a vision, but the parent can do no more. A single exception to this concept was noted but the following incident was regarded as absolutely inexplicable, a thing beyond expectation or comprehension.

756 789 A certain Kimsquit shaman had the supernatural being from whom he had derived his power actually resident in his body. At the time he obtained the gift, his benefactor had spoken to him.

"Henceforth," it said, "I will live in your right arm, my head located near your wrist, my tail near your elbow. When you cure a sick person place your arm against whatever part of his body is affected and I will draw forth the sickness with my mouth."

Thanks to this assistance, the shaman was able to perform marvellous cures, as the being never failed to suck out the disease. Though aware of his supernatural guest, the shaman himself never saw it except when he summoned it to cure a patient; then it came forth from his arm, though no one else could see it. When he had blown away the sickness, in the usual manner of shamans, the supernatural one returned within his arm, out of sight.

When the shaman grew old he called a friend to him and asked him to receive his power, telling him where, and how, it was localized. The man consented. The shaman then began to talk in the language of supernatural beings, as shamans often do, and presently the supernatural one came forth and became visible to the friend as a small lizard-like creature sitting on the palm of the shaman's hand. This frightened the friend and he declined the creature on the ground that he lacked ceremonial purity, hence his body was not a fitting receptacle. The shaman urged him to receive the creature, but when he continued to refuse, allowed it to return to his own arm. When the shaman died a few years later the friend

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bitterly regretted his own cowardice, for the wonderful cures stopped, whereas, had he accepted the supernatural guest, he would have been able to perform them.

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SHAMANS FROM THE DEAD

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There remain to be described shamans from the dead, whose abilities and prerogatives are almost identical with those already described. They obtain their power either from the visitation of a ghost in this world, or by a journey to the land of shades below. The following incident explains why shamans alone can hold converse with ghosts.

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Once, long ago, the lover of a young girl died. She was so heart-broken that in her agony, four days after his burial, she lay down on his grave to weep. The dead man was able to visit her and in due time she gave birth to a child, who, like its father, was a ghost, with drawn face and glaring eyes. The perturbed woman smiled it in the forest, her love overcoming a feeling of repulsion, and when she returned to her home she endeavoured to prevent her own mother handling the infant, knowing that she would be horrified. The grandmother insisted, but as soon as she saw the ghastly appearance of the child she dropped it in horror, and the infant vanished.

Since then there has been a barrier, resembling a wall of smoke, between mortals and the dead. If the old woman had not dropped her grandchild, the living would still be able to converse with their deceased friends and relatives.

Nowadays, shamans alone are able to lift the barrier and discourse with the ghosts of those who have departed. These are quite common visitors to the land of the living, but only a shaman can understand their languages, of which one is a series of whistles, and the other resembles the attempts at speech made by a tongueless individual. Shamans can learn what the dead require and so transmit the knowledge to the relatives of the deceased. As, long ago, shamans whose powers were derived from animals were able to teach mortals the proper methods of hunting, and the taboos enjoined, so a

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C *Wa'ał ẁaxwiyaxiłi* | *yaa dis̓ɬwalaẁadał* | *dastłiqwaɬaɬi:* 593*
I gazed upon | what gave me power as a shaman(*f*) | when it stood up 756

ẁaxa waxaw a'ał xaɬi
in the centre of a place of petrified power(*k*).

(*a*) This was the woman's *tsetsaɬ* designation; her shaman's name has been forgotten. [551]

(*b*) Recorded as song VII D 56, National Museum of Canada; quartet, Reuben Schooner, leader, Jim Pollard, prompter and announcer, assisted by *Tal'o* Charlie and Steamboat Annie.

(*c*) That is: The sky moved up and down. Grandiloquent phrases of this kind are frequent in songs used by shamans. [195]

(*d*) Refers to the supernatural beings.

(*e*) *Xwaxwaxmile* is said to be the word for salmon in the language of the supernatural beings; it is used by mortals in the rites following the taking of the first spring salmon. The shaman has received some of her power from a fish. [198] [226]

(*f*) Refers to the supernatural beings.

(*g*) Reference to the wash-basin shows that the shaman had power to heal the sick.

(*h*) The meaning is obscure. Apparently the shaman had been carried away by *Tłiexpilitse·a* and treated by immersion in a basin in which eagle down was deposited.

(*i*) This refers to the supernatural being, *Awaxitsłimum*, who restores to life mortals killed by the receipt of too much power from *Tłiexpilitse·a*. It is clear that this line befell the shaman. [776]

(*j*) The woman is said to have received power from several sources, salmon, ghosts, and *Tłiexpilitse·a* herself. It is impossible to state which of her supernatural patrons is referred to in this subdivision.

(*k*) The woman must have been taken to one of the spots where cures could be effected by the power of a supernatural being petrified there. [755]

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[776]

Song Used by Nuxalk-maiscoix(a), a Kimsquit Man(b)

A *Awaxqwiyaxmaɬi* | *wax dastłiẁaxmaɬi* | *aiakaxiast*
Look at the turning supernatural beings above(*c*), not one is | wise one(*s*)!
my equal(*d*),

[WORDLESS CHORUS]

B *Awaɬqiłiłaiyaxc'aɬ* | *atsaiyaxtsamaɬxaɬ* | *aiakaxiast*
You must sometimes waken at night to meditate on what I am | wise one!
bringing your mouth(*f*),

[WORDLESS CHORUS]

C *Xaxayaɬxaɬiłaɬ* | *xłaxaɬiłłaxmaɬa* | *aiakaxiast*
You must sometimes use your wash-basin(*g*), | wise one!

[WORDLESS CHORUS]

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Wamnyelaqa	*yalin ẖi:*	*alẖxalẖaẖa*	*ainá'a*	*aainá'a*
?	good opinion	her	*ainá'a*	*aainá'a*

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(*a*) Recorded as song VII D 61, National Museum of Canada; singer, Jim Pollard.
(*b*) This word has no meaning.
(*c*) This word has no meaning.

The above is a very popular song, said to be ancient. Unfortunately, it was impossible to obtain a literal translation although the significance is well known. A free interpretation is:

"They say I loved her very dearly? No! The dimple in my left cheek merely smiled at [had a good opinion of] her."

It is often sung when a man is accused of being on unduly friendly terms with a girl.

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Man's Love Song in Chinook Jargon(a)

Klawá:	*kwin*	*naika*	*nanawa*
I wonder(*b*)	what	I	think(*c*)
kap-a	*okuk*	*tsii*	*ikamuta*
of	that	chief(*d*)	woman;
kaiyu	*naika*	*wawa*	*pát-a*
a great deal	I	talk	her(*e*);
kela	*cum*	*naika'*	
no	shame(*f*)	I(*g*).	

(*a*) Recorded as song VII D 48, National Museum of Canada; singer, Reuben Schooner. The singer completed the record with a Bella Coola song of which the text could not be obtained.
(*b*) Literally: Perhaps. This word is used for many dubitative expressions.
(*c*) This song follows the usual English pattern as it has been arranged in lines.
(*d*) In the sense of: Important.
(*e*) That is: I have been talking a great deal to her.
(*f*) This is the English word "shame" which has been adopted into Chinook.
(*g*) That is: I have had no shame in what I have said to her.

Kitsqaxle Woman's Love Song(a)

Sitsqualla	*waalikaa* | *Alilaklpdimaalai* | *alwaqsnaalaaalaxsamalaxwa*
Why is the man talking so much(*b*)?	I don't like him any more.

2:56:Dowith. E-1 (1922-1924) 1968
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Awakkimaits: Easter name of a Kimsquit woman.
awakkimaut, "This is to Make Drought Turn Back": Said when a call is answered, to heal disease upon a fire for the dead.
Awakwis, "Place of Big Stones in the River": Village at Kemano.
Awakkiskaiu: Woman introduced in a repository and hence becomes supernatural.
awakkiuk'a: Rainbow-coloured mourning worn by Haida.
Awakwiskaiu: Supernatural name of Haida.
awakkiut: Share used by which the tongue is held during the Amaim dance.
Awakkiutsaus: Man mentioned in an ancient story.
Awakkiwaus, "The One that Fills the Rivers": Supernatural name of honey-hook spirits.
awakkuk: Mourning.
awakwaus: Mourning song composed for a chief and, apparently, the singing of one.
Awakwaus: Place on the north-west side of Dean Channel, about nine miles from its head, where curative power is ascribed.
Awanaxsiwaus: Supernatural beings who reward the supreme goal of the Kwakiutl deities.
Awanikkiwaus: Supernatural being who recovers those killed by the receipt of too much power from *Dzoqoēlōxs*.
awanqaya: Wearing of shells, armlets.
awanqay: Person who carries early shelters in a hand-net.
awaqwiwaus: Recovery woman such as are found in a tale near the headwaters of the Bella Coola.
Awaqwaxalik: Supernatural being who regulates the height of tides in rivers.
awaxalaxsiwa: To wrest, especially a supernatural being.
Awaxsiwaiu: One of the first settlers on Dallas.
Awaxsiwaiu, "What Kills People": Name created by *Omaxa* in the beginning of time with reference to the source of salmon.
awayaxwaus: Silver resting in darkness before a feasting dance.
Awayaxwaiwaus: Supernatural being who gives inspiration.
Awaxwikwaxsiwa: 1—Supernatural name of *awaxsiwa*.
2—Method of killing practised by *awaxsiwa*.
Awaxwikwaxsiwa-ala: Name of a Bella Coola shaman.
Awa-qwaqlaus: Name of a Kimsquit woman.
awaxsiwa-skaiwaus: The rare prerogative of changing from Easter to summer time on whatever system.
Awaxsiwaus, "The Saviour": One of *Dzoqoēlōxs*'s names and hence a deity-name given to shamans.
Awaxsiwaiu: One of the four men to settle on *Xa'a* in the beginning of time.
awaxsiwaus: Paradise ery uttered by a Easter ecstatic.
Awaxsiwa-ala: Easter name of a Kimsquit man.
Awaxs: Place on north side of North Bentinck Arm, about one-quarter mile from its head.
awaxsiwaxsiwa, "The Left Side," in the language of ghosts: Identical with *awaxsiwa*, q.v.
Awaxsiwaiu: One of the four women to settle on *Xa'a* in the beginning of time.
Awaxsiwaiwaus: One of the names of Great Blue Heron as chief.
awaxsiwaus: 1—Supernatural beam furnished with engaged platforms for guests.
2—Village on Kemano.

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]